

# Assessment of the Gender Role in Agricultural Activities at Damota Kebele of Haramaya District, Eastern Hararghe Zone, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

The study was conducted to identify and assess the gender roles in agricultural activities in Damota Kebele of Haramaya district. 20 sample respondents out of this 10 women and 10 men were selected based on criteria's settled. Both primary and secondary data were collected from respondents and Kebele administration office using in-depth interviews, personal observation and participatory discussion. Open-ended questionnaire and checklist were employed to collect qualitative data. Two day field trips were used to collect primary and secondary data. The collected data were analyzed through narrative description and interpretations of meaning and actions. The results and findings of study indicate that farmers were practicing mixed farming system with the experience of more than 15 years. Women access the lands of their husbands and their family land in the absence of male child in the family and in the presence of legal due to influenced by the culture of the area. Women were participating in crop production activities such seed preparation, sowing, weeding and marketing, but the rest of actives were mainly executed by men household. Their roles were high in livestock production as compared to crop production; feeding, milking, dung clearance, management, marketing and others were major activities that women performed. Shortage of land, overload of women activities, lack infrastructures, lack of access to extension service and cultural factors were major constraints hindered both women and men to execute their agricultural activities in productive manner. Women informal group and women group meeting were major opportunities of study area. Awareness creation to community, agricultural intensification, rural infrastructure improvement, improved technologies and reducing workload of development agents and women are the major recommendation given by the study for government and responsible body.

**Keywords:** Gender, Role, Agriculture, Activities, Women, Men

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and Justification

Women make up almost 50 percent of the agricultural labor force in sub-Saharan Africa, an increase from about 45 percent in 1980 (FAO, 2011). At a general level, women's work is primarily in the domestic sphere, while men are viewed as working outside the domestic sphere as the main breadwinners (Kes and Swaminathan, 2006). This means that a majority of women's work tends to be economically 'invisible'.

Gender division of labor in rural Ethiopia varies in terms of farming systems, cultural settings, location and the different wealth categories (Abera et al. 2006; Mollel and Mtenga 2000). Gender roles in the country also vary according to ethnicity, income, and status. Moreover, as has already mentioned, Ethiopian women are largely responsible for nearly all reproductive tasks such as fetching fuel wood and water, cooking, washing, cleaning and child care. In most cases, men are the heads of households and are therefore the principal decision-makers in the household although some consultation with women may take place. Ethiopian women have longer working hours than men; they carry much of the burden of reproductive work in addition to their productive activities (JICA, 1999). They are commonly responsible, along with their children, for taking care of small livestock, production and marketing of butter, cheese, and vegetables. They also engage in non-farm income activities such as petty trading, beer brewing and leather work. However, certain agricultural activities such as ploughing and threshing are mostly done by males in male headed households (FAO, 1997).

Due to the fact that, gender roles in agricultural activities were different from place to place due to cultural, socio-economic, type of activities, institutional and other factors (Dereje, 2013; Hussien, 2014; Leulseged et al., 2015). In Damota Kebele, both men and women perform different agricultural activities. But, the enrollment of women and men in different stage crop and livestock production are not clearly substantiated. This study motivates researchers to identify the major agricultural activities conducted by men and women through clearly describe in qualitative manner. The principal premise of the study is that Haramaya district rural

women roles in agricultural activities undertake at the household and community levels are not counted as male counterparts.

## 1.2. Objective

1. To identify and assess the gender roles in agricultural activities in study area.
2. To identify constraints and opportunities of gender roles in agricultural activities in the study area.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Description of the Study Area

Damota is one of the *kebele* in Haramaya district, Eastern Hararghe, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia. The *kebele* is located about 7km Northeast of Haramaya town and 21 km from Harara town, the capital of East Hararghe Zone. The *kebele* is bordered with Bate 03 *kebele* in the West, Kombolcha in the East, Haka in the South and Tinike in the North. The *kebele* consist of 19 village communities. The altitude of this *kebele* ranges from 1800 to 2100 meters above sea level. The annual rain fall is ranging from 700-1200 mm. The mean maximum and minimum temperatures are 16 and 23 degree Celsius, respectively. The total number of population is 8669 of whom 4664 Male and 4005 Female. The total number of household head is 1074 of whom 1004 Male and 70 Female. The total coverage of land is 1532 ha; out of this 1181 ha are cultivated land and 352 ha are uncultivable land. Maize, sorghum, wheat, barley, vegetables (carrot, potato, cabbage, lettuce, chill pepper and beetroot), chickpea and *chat* are crops produced in the study area. Cattle, small ruminants, donkey and poultry are livestock produced in the *kebele* (DJKAO, 2016).

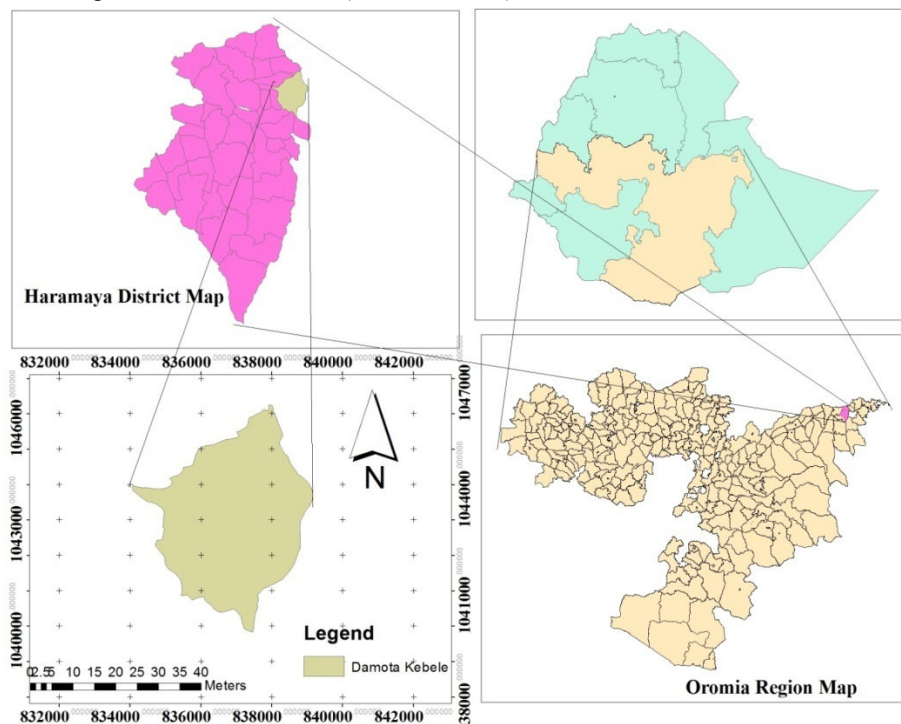


Figure 1: Map of study area

### 2.2. Sampling Technique

Haramaya district and Damota *kebele* out of 33 *kebeles* was selected purposively due to easily accessible for transport and nearer to our university to perform research activities with less cost. A sample of 20 households that consist 10 from male and 10 from female were selected purposively based on experience of farming, willingness to give information and others as criteria collaboration with the administrators, key informants and DAs of the respective *kebele*.

### 2.3. Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from 20 sample households in the *kebele* through in-depth interviews and participatory observation by field work. Secondary data was collected from *kebele* administration and development agent offices about description of study area. Qualitative data was collected from sample household by in-depth interviews. The research materials like field notes, recorders, camera, pen and other required facilities were used to collect data. Checklist and open ended

questionnaire were employed to collect both secondary and primary data, respectively. Those questionnaire and checklist were prepared prior to data collection. Two day field trips were employed to collect data from the sample respondents. The collected data were analyzed through narrative description and interpretations of meaning and actions.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Under these findings, collections of data and discussion are presented. The findings are categorized in different contents as per questionnaire designed prior to data collection.

#### 3.1. Background Information of Respondents

Both men and women respondents of the study area major economic activity were highly dependent on agriculture to earn income and food consumption. As observed and respondents indicate that most of their farming land was covered by cash crops such as chat, carrot, potato, etc. Beside this, farmers in the study area were producing cereal crops such as maize, sorghum, haricot bean and others as well as rearing livestock such as cattle, donkey, ruminant and poultry. Most of respondents' education status was illiterate and some of them were educated under primary education. The sample respondents had long years in farming which were more than 15 years engaged in farming activities. Some of sample respondents were participated in non-agricultural activities such as shopping, trading oxen and chat and others. Most of farmers in the study area were followed Muslim religion.

#### 3.2. Access of Land by Gender

Land is the most important resource to undertake agricultural production for income and livelihood purpose. In the study area, land was belongs to the men. The sample respondents revealed that women have not access to land from their family. The reason was due to shortage of land, cultural influence and norm of the society, women cannot access to land. Women respondents said that *women cannot access land form their family; they obtained husband land while married*. That means women obtained land of their husbands before that; nobody gives land to women. Even if the families have one son and the rest daughters, all land was transferred to the son. In the study area the probability of access to land for women is occurred, when all children of the family are females. But, if women were ask legally they can obtained the land of their family. In the society, women made such actions were undermined. Because of this, most of women in the study area accept the norm of the society. In general, women in the study area access land while married, divorced and widowed which was similar to study conducted by (Hussien, 2014).

But, Sharia and FDRE Constitution did not accept the practices of the society. Respondents revealed that Sharia said that give two hands of property is given to the sons and one hands of property is given to the daughters. Ethiopia adopted laws and policies to ensure gender equality since 1991. Taking the historical legacy of women's discrimination in the country and with a view to remedying a long lasting gender inequality, the FDRE Constitution separately provides for women's rights under Articles 34 and 35. The Constitution further prescribes that "Women have the right to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer property. In particular, they have equal rights with men with respect to use, transfer, administration and control of land. They shall also enjoy equal treatment in the inheritance of property" (Ibid, Art. 35 (7)).



#### Box 1: Access land by Gender

He told that I did not offer land to my daughter rather I kill myself. I give heifer to daughter when she married. When she come "Sokka" to my house, I was give some grain yield when go back to their home.

Figure 2: Farmer perception of land distribution to their children.



### 3.3. Gender Roles in Crop Production

As highlighted under description of respondents, agriculture is the main livelihood system of farmers in the study area. Both men and women in the area were participated in crop production activities. But, the degree, level and stage of participation on crop production were not similar between men and women in the study area. There were different activities practiced by farmers in the area to produce crops such as seed preparation, land preparation, sowing, weeding, harvesting, threshing, transporting, storing and marketing. Depending on type of crop produced, participation of men and women in crop production activities was different. Most of horticultural crop production activities were conducted by women, but men were helping them in planting as well as harvesting stage of production. The rest activities in horticultural crop production were practiced by women, even the income obtained from this crop was not asked by men due to believe as women work. On the rest crops such as cereal, chat and others, men farmers were engaged in different stage of production. In this type of crop, the role of women were belongs to seed preparation for cereal crops, rarely weeding, weevil protection if stored under warehouse, marketing especially chat crop and indirect roles in crop production which similar to study conducted by (Mengiste, 2015). Farmers said that *“women in our area are not plough land as that of Shoa people but they remove weeds from the crops and sowing haricot bean on soil and water conservation structures that prepared by men”*. The respondents believe that the indirect women role in crop production was high than the direct roles/involvement in crop production. Those women respondents said that *“women are the driver force of men activities unless women are delivering breakfast, lunch and dinner to men they are not forcefully implement the activities”*. Men respondents believe that men who have strong wife were developed within short period of time. Most of time women were buy the grain from the market for consumption as well as seed purpose.



Figure 3: Personal observation of women planting maize crop in chat crop by carrying her child.

In the study area, women involvement in agricultural activities was high which similar to study conducted by (Ogato et al., 2009) on crop production and management activities. Both women and men quoted women in different ways in the study area. Women respondents in the study area *were perceived women as the pillar of house; whenever the pillar of the house is not straight the house will fail*. That means unless women within the household is treated, managed and respected, the output obtained from them is not successful in development in general and at agricultural production in particular. Women were engaged in productive, reproductive and community management activities in the study area, but men were not participated in reproductive activities. Therefore, women are not only the pillar of the house but also the pillar of country.



Figure 4: Participatory group discussion among female respondents in Damota Kebele.

#### Box 2: Women Perception in Agriculture

She told that there is no work assigned to men and women in nature. In the morning I prepare the breakfast and lunch for me and my husband as well as children. After that me and my husband work together, while he prepare row for planting and threshing I plant seed and clean the grain during threshing. Still now we didn't hired labor and ask support for our activities.

#### Box 3: Women activities in day

Aliya said that starting from morning women engage in fetching water, food preparation, milking the cattle, raring cattle, collection of firewood, marketing, weeding, washing clothes and others activities. So, women are the pillar of the house nobody denies it. Husband knows our activities when they left alone in the house during feud is occur. When spouses are feud with their husbands, they were going to relatives called “Sokka”.

Men respondents in the study area were also understand the roles of women in crop production in particular and agricultural production in general. Women in the study are quoted in different ways by men counterparts. The male respondent of the area said that “*women are the spring of river or lake and women are managers of the farm*”. This man was told us all activities of his home is run by the wife, his contribution is supporting or advising her roles.

#### 3.4. *Gender Role in Livestock Production*

Livestock feeding, milking, marketing, clearance of dung, health service and fattening were major activities undertaken by respondents in the study area. Most of respondents revealed that due to lack of access to grazing, they have small number of cattle's, ruminants and donkeys. They produced through cut and carry system. Most of activities of livestock production were undertaken by women. In the study area, poultry was produced through traditional system. Women have great roles in management, protection and marketing systems of poultry. Men were not participating in poultry production, even men respondents did not know the exact number of poultry exist in their home. And also, it is shame to ask the income obtained from poultry marketing due to poultry production was belongs to women and children in the society. In the study area, men farmers were participating in cattle (oxen) livestock production. This was because of oxen prick the women, men have responsible to imprison and sell to the markets. But, women provide feeds to oxen imprisoned in the specific place. In general, the role of women is high in livestock production than in crop production in the study area. Women have great role in selling all livestock type produced in the study area except dangerous oxen.

#### 3.5. *Constraints and Opportunities of Gender Role in Agricultural Activities*

##### 3.5.1. *Constraints of Gender Role in Agricultural Activities*

In the study area, the sample respondents were raised different constraints that affect both women and men to fully participate in agricultural activities. The followings were major constraints discussed in detail.

##### **Shortage of Land**

Both grazing and cultivated land were major factors that affect famers to participate in agricultural activities. Some of women respondents were raised small size of land owned for cultivation was affect our participation. This was due to land small it did not require more labor, our men household will do all activities conducted on our farm. Small size of land by the farmer tends women not to participate in agricultural production especially for crop production activities. The result of finding was similar in other studies conducted on women participation crop production and management (Ogato et al., 2009).

##### **Workload of Women Activities**

The sample respondents raised that reproductive activity takes more time of women not to be participate in crop production activities. As women respondents indicate that starting from more morning up to night, we were conduct different reproductive activities. This resulted on women to think more the home and home related activities. Our men and children were not support them because they sent their child to school. Due to cultural influence, men were not support our reproductive activities. But, small number of men were support some of reproductive activities such as fetching water and firewood collection. Men were fetch water in early morning before community was wake up from sleeping. The action was made to protect themselves from the influence of community attitudes. Especially, those influence highly acted by women themselves when coming together. Men were also collected firewood for consumption purpose. The activity was conducted by men if firewood found around the farm, unless they were not collect firewood from communal lands. Women sample respondents revealed that men were not taken prepared food for eating. The finding of the result was compromise with study conducted by (JICA, 1999). That was Ethiopian women having longer working hours than men; they carry much of the burden of reproductive work in addition to their productive activities.

##### **Lack of Infrastructure**

Electricity and road were the major infrastructural problems of farmers in the study area. The observation result and sample respondents revealed that due to lack of access and maintenance of road, it was difficult to sell their product at the required time. This was barrier for both women and men farmers in the study area to obtain the required income from agricultural products. The electricity is existing in the study area, but the distribution of power on individual farmers is the problem in the kebele. The electrical power has great contribution in reduction of women burden in reproductive activities in terms of reducing firewood collection and grinding of the grain. But, currently as compared to the past, women overload was decreased due to existence of electric power and road. One of women respondent said that “*we didn't get local grinding mill from our house even if required for medicine*”.

##### **Lack of Access to Extension Services**

Training, improved variety, credit and awareness raising program were major extension service problems raised by respondents in the study area. The sample respondents revealed that extension services (training) were given for once or two times per year. But, it does not address the whole farmers at time. The selection of farmers is

bias for extension service. Kebele administration and DAs were selecting the farmers who have relationship among them. The sample respondent revealed that extension workers run other activities outside agricultural activities. Those farmers do not obtain their advice at required time.

### **Cultural Factor**

In the study area, due to the influence of culture perception within the society women were not participated in the forceful tasks and prejudice them to access land from their family. The cultural factor influence women not to express their feeling and needs within their family in particular and community in general. These have an impact for women to engage in agricultural activities. Men respondents indicate that small size of land agricultural activities (horticultural crops) that generates low income was belong to women and similar for less income activities.

#### *3.5.2. Opportunities of Gender Role in Agricultural Activities*

The sample respondents raised that small number of opportunities to undertake agricultural activities in the study area. But, the researchers were observe some of opportunities exist for women to participate in agricultural activities. The explanation is presented in below.

### **Informal Group of Women**

Women in study area were organized themselves in the group to sell milk in the markets. The women respondents indicate that the revolving activity reaches them once per three months. The activity was save our time to devote both in agricultural activities and home based activities.

### **Women Group Meeting**

Women are meet together alone without presence of men for common meeting in the area. This helps women to reflect their ideas and feeling well for responsible body.

In addition, existence of women representative, presence of health and development extension workers from different discipline, availability of cooperatives, education intuitions, chat marketing and availability of irrigation were major opportunities observed by the researchers if well implemented and organized in coordinated manner.

## **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *4.1. Conclusions*

Sample respondents in the study area are practicing mixed farming system over 15 years, produced mainly cash and cereal crop as well as raring cattle and ruminants. They practiced non-agricultural activities for livelihood purpose.

Land is the most important resource of farmers in the study area. There is great difference of access of land between men and women in the kebele. Women access the lands of their husbands and their family in the absence of male child in the family and if legal asked family land. Women were limited to obtain family land in legal manner due to cultural is influence in the society.

Both women and men in the study area have a great role in crop and livestock production. The involvement of women in crop production activities were seed preparation, sowing, weeding, marketing and indirect influence, but the rest activities were conducted by men farmers. In all livestock species the roles of women were high than men in feeding, milking, clearance of dung, management and marketing except oxen due to prink women especially in marketing. The involvement of women in livestock production was high than crop production in the study area.

Shortage of land, workload of women activities (overall participation of women in gender division of labor), lack of infrastructures (electricity and road), extension services (overload of DAs activities, selection bias for services, shortage of services and others) and cultural factors were the main constraints affect both men and women in agricultural activities.

Informal women group, women group meeting, availability of (technical expertise, government structures, education intuitions, irrigation access) and chat marketing are major opportunities exist to strengthen the role of women and men in agricultural production.

### *4.2. Recommendations*

Based on finding obtained and conclusion made, the following are recommendations given to the government and responsible body.

- Strengthening intensification of agricultural farming systems and producing high value crops.
- Creating awareness of community through preparation of awareness raising program on required issues.
- Expansion and maintaining of rural infrastructures through community as well as government participation.
- Generating and transfer gender based agricultural technology through participation of farmers and stakeholders.
- Strengthening and encouraging women's through improvement and generation of women-time saving

technologies

- Strengthening and encouraging women informal groups through supporting and improving in scientific ways.
- Reducing workload of development agents to deliver the required advice to the farmers.
- Utilization of existing opportunities in coordinated manner among different stakeholders.
- Taking care of attention during farmer selection for extension service at local level.
- Improving access to extension services their by using different extension method and approaches.
- Encouraging and creating awareness for men farmers to share possible reproductive activities of women farmers.

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